



# WISCONSIN WOMEN *in* CONSERVATION

## ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR 2: OCT 2021 - SEPT 2022



**"Wisconsin Women in Conservation, almost all my great connections have come from your connections. Thank you!"** -Stacia Nordin, 2022 Conservation Plan participant



**Wisconsin  
Farmers  
Union**



*working together for a brighter future*

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# THE PROJECT

Wisconsin Women in Conservation (WiWiC) provides women landowners and farmers with peer-to-peer opportunities to network locally and explore land stewardship with agencies and professionals. 35% of Wisconsin's primary operators are women. WiWiC promotes and funds Conservation Plan writing to guide this increasingly important but historically underserved group. The 3-year NRCS-funded project (launched in 2021) is led by the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute and includes Marbledseed, Renewing the Countryside, and Wisconsin Farmers Union. Primary deliverables include 50+ Conservation Plans and a 2023 case study publication featuring participant achievements.

**At the conclusion of Year 2: 2,180 participants were actively engaged with the newsletter and events (up from 1,337 at the end of Year 1). 3,800 were following on social media (up from 2,301 in Year 1).**



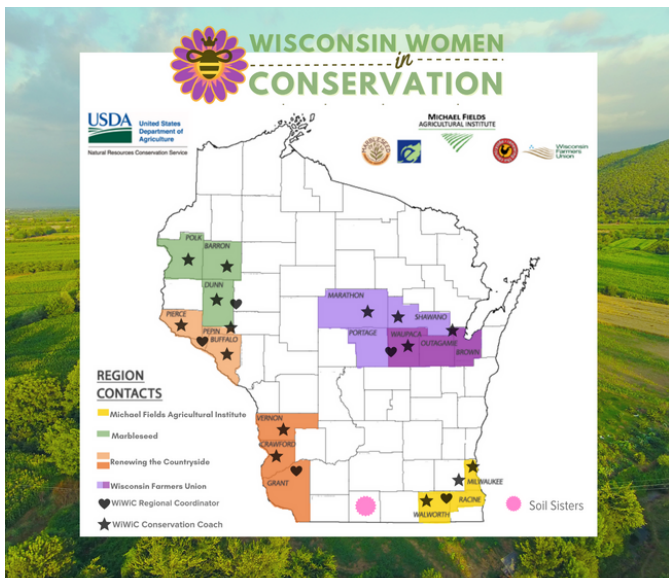
August 11 Field Day  
Brattset Family Farm

**35** Professional Conservation Plans Completed in 2022

**68** Professional Conservation Plans Currently in Process Moving into 2023

## REGIONAL NETWORKS

WiWiC builds local networks of women farmers, landowners and conservation professionals to facilitate relationships and increase conservation results. **Six Regional Networks**, managed by the partner organizations, serve tri-county clusters in the Northwest, North Central, West Central, Southwest, Southeast and Northeast. A new **WiWiC MKE Urban Ag Network** debuted in 2022 with 3 Zoom events and a Fall Gathering. An additional pop-up "Soil Sisters" network convened in Green County. **Six Regional Coordinators** support the networks by organizing events, recruiting speakers, writing regional newsletters, and personally connecting landowners with local professionals to write Conservation Plans.



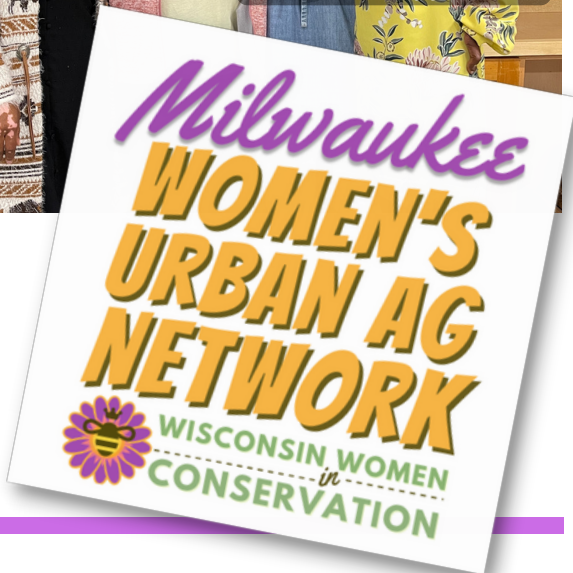
October 11 Gathering  
Urban Ecology Center

## CONSERVATION COACHES

WiWiC offered mentorship with **15 women Conservation Coaches** who are farmers/landowners in the targeted counties and have implemented NRCS cost-share programs or adopted regenerative strategies on their land. Each Conservation Coach hosts a field day on their property, presents during virtual events, participates in media outreach, and is interviewed on WiWiC's **Queen Bee Sessions podcast**. Conservation Coach case studies, along with those of program participants, will be featured in a 2023 publication.

### Year 2 Research Take Away:

**83% of program participants reported feeling More Supported and 71% reported feeling More Hopeful after attending.**







# WiWiC EVENTS

In addition to offering expert professional content, all WiWiC events (both in-person and virtual) include peer-to-peer networking in a **Learning Circle model**. Women are invited to introduce themselves and talk about their land history, their victories, their struggles and their hopes related to stewardship. This format allows women to express both their needs and their experiences - creating valuable connections and resource-sharing, as well as space to problem solve and re-imagine technical support as community-generated.



**15** + **6** + **4** + **13**  
**Zoom Events**   **Field Days**   **Happy Hours**   **Learning Circles**

In 2022, WiWiC added 7 additional counties and hosted events in 6 regions across the state. 38 total events engaged 1,295 participants in a variety of conservation discussions, soil health demonstrations and networking opportunities.

## WINTER MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TRAININGS

### Regional Zoom Workshops

Based on our 2020 events, the WiWiC Team realized the value of mental health support raining to our participants and their networks. We partnered with Farm Well Wisconsin to provide COMET (Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory) trainings in Jan-March.

Northwest	15 participants
West Central	21
Southeast	9
Northeast	9
Southwest	19

## SPRING LEARNING CIRCLES

### Regional In-Person Events

Spring "Climate Smart Soil Solutions" gatherings were set at inspiring locations like nature centers, and included introductions, expert content, network building and Q&A. Most regions included a demo on nitrates in water and offered simple testing of samples. April-May, 3 hrs.

Northwest	21 participants
West Central	17
Southeast	23
Northeast	15
North Central	21
Southwest	24

## WIWIC SUMMER CAMP

### Virtual Lunch Series

Third Thursday of May, June, July, August. One-hour seminars were led by content experts from Pheasants Forever, American Farmland Trust, Pollinator Partnership and Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association on topics of interest that ranked highest in evaluations. Video, Chat and resources are archived on [WiWiC's Blog](#).

May: Creating Prairie Habitat	120
June: Enhancing Pollinators	183
July: Managing Woodlands	150
August: Land Legacy/Trusts	136

## FIELD DAYS

### Regional Farm Tours

Conservation Coaches hosted field days on their land to demonstrate conservation practices. Local professionals, including NRCS and Pheasants Forever staff, were on hand to lead rainfall simulators and soil health demos. Programs included Learning Circle time and a shared meal. July/Sept, 3-5 hrs.

Northwest	21 participants
West Central	28
Southeast	23
Northeast	21
North Central	34
Southwest	26

## FALL LEARNING CIRCLES

### Regional In-Person Events

Fall "Harvest Your Conservation Potential" gatherings were held at nature centers and wineries. Regional Coordinators facilitated informal networking with local NRCS, Pheasants Forever and other conservation professionals. These allowed intimate Q&A on conservation planning. Sept/Oct, 3-4hrs.

Northwest	26 participants
West Central	12
Southeast	15
Northeast	15
North Central	12
Southwest	14



*Educator Network Happy Hour in Mount Horeb during Wisconsin Women in Conservation Week July 18*



Through the efforts of WiWiC, Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers declared July 18-24 the 2nd Annual "Wisconsin Women in Conservation Week." WiWiC hosted 4 "Happy Hour" networking events across the state for educators that week, with an average of 25 participants at each. WiWiC hosted Spring and Fall Educator Network Zoom Meet-Ups, with 56 attending each. A state-wide conference is planned for April 18, 2023, in Stevens Point.

"As a new NRCS employee and recently out of college, I found the WiWiC Educator Network such a great resource for me to find support as I start my career. The Happy Hour was the perfect opportunity to network and connect with mentors."

*Educator Network Zoom participant*

### Year 2 Research Take Away:

After attending an event, 79% of participants said they were **Very Likely** to reach out to NRCS about a conservation topic.





# OUTREACH & MEDIA

WiWiC enjoyed another year of great support from local, statewide and national media outlets, including tremendous interest in a winter mental health support series which was featured nationally in the [Daily Yonder](#), [Hoard's Dairyman](#) and [Civil Eats](#), as well as statewide on [Milwaukee Public Radio](#), [Eau Claire TV13](#), and the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). WiWiC Conservation Coaches were featured on the national [Servant Leadership Today](#) podcast and [WPR's The Morning Show](#) for an Earth Day special on regenerative ag. A Field Day at Bouressa Family Farm was covered extensively in a [Spectrum TV piece](#), as was a WiWiC Conservation Plan site walk in [Wisconsin State Farmer](#). On social media, WiWiC added a Tik Tok channel in Sept '22, and built FB followers to 2.5K and Insta to 1.3K. [The Queen Bee Sessions](#) podcast launched in March '22 and will be monthly in 2023.



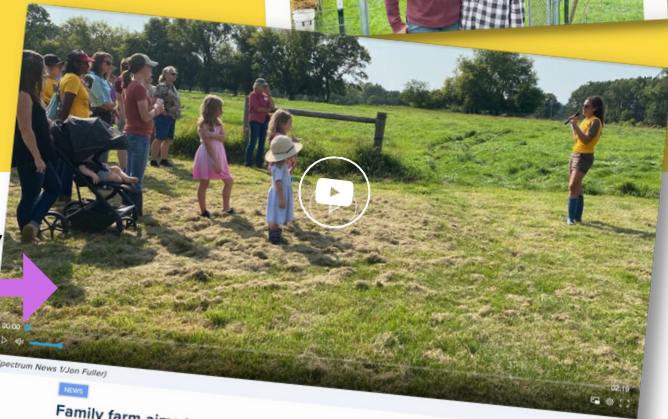
## Brooklyn resident shares passion for garden education

Amber Burke Wisconsin State Farmer

Published 2:00 pm, 27 May 2022

View Comments

Master Gardener Heather Lynch has a passion for helping people develop a plan for their garden and discovering the joy of raising their own food. "It is important to me to educate people how to grow their own food because there can be such a disconnect from people understanding where their food comes from when they buy everything at the grocery store," said Lynch of Brooklyn, Wis.



Family farm aims to educate more women about conservation practices



conservation news and resources for Wisconsin's women farmers and landowners

As farmers, our greatest resource, after the soil, is each other.

Conservation Coach Rachel Bouressa, interviewed on Spectrum News One, Green Bay

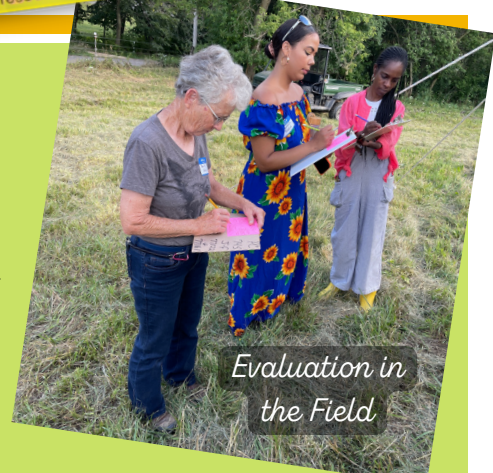


WiWiC was honored to accept the 2022 Julie Peltier Award from the Wisconsin Society of American Foresters for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts.

The Buzz monthly e-newsletter had 2,180 subscribers by the end of Year 2, building to an **open rate average of more than 60%**. Regional Coordinators send out separate newsletters to their 6 Regional Networks, with subscriptions of 175 to 398 members.

# RESEARCH & EVALUATION

Ongoing research and evaluation enabled the WiWiC team to design content on an ever-evolving basis, based on participant surveys. Other evaluation goals include documenting knowledge gains made by participants and interest in/barriers to working with professionals on Conservation Plans. A Conservation Plan is a tool for participants to walk their land with a professional, understand the potential for conservation practices, and explore implementation options. The main research interest is to learn how bonding/networking among participants impacts conservation implementation. Over 75% of 2022 in-person participants completed evaluations. **The most commonly indicated barrier to conservation implementation was "being swamped by time commitments."**



# 220

women completed in-person evaluations in

# 2022



Going through the process of developing a land conservation plan was such an opportunity for me as a new landowner. I learned so much on the land walk and having the actual plan now is something I can reference and use for years to come. The WiWiC women-focused setting and connecting with other area women landowners gave me a safe space to ask questions.

**-Heather Lynch of Green County, 2022 WiWiC Conservation Plan participant**

### Year 2 Research Take Away:

Both novice and seasoned participants most often cited **Introductions** as being the time during the meetings when they were most engaged and more than half of participants indicated that they never felt disengaged during the meetings.